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STATEMENT BY
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BEFORE THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD
TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE
GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES
ON THE "QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR "

NEW YORK, 15 AUGUST 1986

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I need hardly restate my Delegation's categorical objection to the consideration of the so-called question of East Timor in this or any other forum for reasons of principle well-known to all members of this Committee. We have also consistently opposed the granting of hearings to so-called petitioners on this matter, for as the record shows, their participation in the deliberations of this Committee, far from serving any useful purpose, has only provided them with a platform from which to launch a constant barrage of spurious allegations and vilifications against my Government. Indeed, it was with considerable ennui, which I am sure is shared by many in this room, that we have sat through today's parade of petitioners for whom no distortion is too gross, no fabrication too far-fetched and no accusation too outrageous to re-hash and recite as long as they serve the purpose of desperately keeping alive a non-issue built around a non-existent cause.

As we have said many times before, responding to this kind of statements would only lend dignity to them. However, the endless repetition of such ludicrous charges, even in the face of detailed and documented facts to the contrary, cannot be allowed to pass unanswered, lest an unwary public may in the end be deceived. So, although we realize that the hour is late, my Delegation feels constrained to impose on the valuable time of this Committee and to speak in order, once again, to set the record straight on at least some of the more outrageous allegations.

Mr. Chairman,

One theme that is constantly being propounded and again today by the distinguished representatives of Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique and Angola, is that the right to self-determination has not been granted to the people of East Timor. We of course know that it is difficult for some people to stop clinging to certain myths or misperceptions, especially when they happen to conform to their political and ideological prejudices. But we think it is time for them to comprehend the fact that it is now a decade ago that self-determination and decolonization have taken place in East Timor in conformity with Resolution 1514 (XV) and Principles VI, VIII and IX of Resolution 1541; that in accordance with their traditional democratic practices the

overwhelming majority of the East Timorese people have chosen independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia; and that in so doing the true representatives of East Timor registered a clear repudiation of the designs of those minority elements which sought to impose by force of arms, a fait accompli on the territory.

It is also time for Indonesia's detractors to view the decolonization process in East Timor with at least a modicum of objectivity, rather than through the prism of their own pre-conceptions and ideological inclinations. If they would do so, they could perhaps see that far from invading, annexing or occupying another independent state, as has happened elsewhere, but on which the same speakers chose to remain silent, Indonesia's role in East Timor has been one of contributing to the process of decolonization of that Territory by helping to ensure that in its essence and realization the democratically expressed will of the majority not be undermined by the armed terror and unilateral imposition of a ruthless minority.

On this point, Mr. Chairman, I seek the indulgence of the Committee, to allow my delegation to summarize as concisely as possible the most salient aspects of the evolution of the decolonization process in East Timor.

The historical record shows that, following the change of Government in Portugal in 1974 and the new Government's attitude towards its colonies overseas, including East Timor, the policy of Indonesia was to support the Portuguese efforts to decolonize the Territory. Indonesia consistently maintained that it had no territorial claim on East Timor, that it would respect any decision made by the people of East Timor and only sought assurances from Portugal that the process of decolonization and the act of self-determination would reflect the true aspirations and will of the East Timorese people. In this regard, a series of meetings between Indonesia and Portugal were held in New York -September 1974; Lisbon - October 1974; London -March 1975; Jakarta - August and September 1975; and Rome -November 1975. At those meetings Indonesia time and again reaffirmed its readiness to cooperate with Portugal in the peaceful and orderly implementation of the process of decolonization, on the basis of Portugal's own plan, subsequently promulgated as Constitutional Law 7/75 (1975).

The facts are that of the five political parties in East Timor at the time, Fretilin was the only one which persistently refused to cooperate in a peaceful and orderly decolonization of the Territory. It boycotted the Macao meeting of June 1975, organized by Portugal and attended by the four other political parties, namely, UDT, APODETI, KOTA and TRABALHISTA, which together represented the overwhelming majority of the people of East Timor. Thus, it was Fretilin's actions to circumvent democratic procedures, its blatant attempt to seize power by force of arms and the subsequent refusal by the East Timorese to submit to its unilateral demands that plunged the Territory into a violent confrontation between the people and Fretilin.

The colonial administration in Dili made no serious effort to stop the bloodshed and the political chaos. In fact, it abandoned the Territory at the height of the civil war in August 1975 and compounded the strife and confusion by clandestinely turning over its arms and munitions to the Fretilin. With the breakdown of authority in East Timor, the civil war raged on, causing a massive influx of tens of thousands of refugees into Indonesian West Timor, thereby creating a serious economic and social burden for Indonesia in its efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the innocent victims of Fretilin brutalities. By October 1975, many thousands had lost their lives in the civil war and more than 42,000 refugees had crossed the border into West Timor.

Despite this unforeseen and deplorable train of events Indonesia continued to urge Portugal to exercise its authority in ensuring a just and orderly decolonization where no single political group would be allowed to impose its will upon the rest of the people. As late as in November 1975, the Indonesian Foreign Minister agreed to meet with his Portuguese counterpart in Rome. At that meeting they concurred on the urgent need to restore peace and order in the Territory so as to enable the people freely to decide their own future. Towards this end it was decided that a meeting between Portugal and all five political parties in East Timor would be held as soon as possible. Although not a party to the proposed talks, Indonesia encouraged all of the political

parties to participate in them. While the other four political parties agreed, Fretilin again refused. Instead, it unilaterally declared the so-called independence of East Timor on November 28, 1975.

After Portugal's abandonment of the Territory and in the face of Fretilin's mounting reign of terror against the people, the other four political parties considered themselves no longer bound to any decolonization covenant as envisaged by the erstwhile colonial power. They began their struggle against the Fretilin forces and in response to Fretilin's UDI, they in turn proclaimed on November 30, 1975 the independence of East Timor through integration with the Republic of Indonesia, established a Provisional Government and called upon the Government of Indonesia to take the necessary steps to protect the lives of the East Timorese who had declared themselves to be Indonesian citizens. It was only at this point, with no action taken by anyone to stop the mass killings and atrocities perpetrated by Fretilin against the East Timorese people, that Indonesia became inexorably involved in the East Timor crisis.

Although the Indonesian people welcomed the expressed desire of the East Timorese people for integration, the Government refused to accede to it until after the exercise of the right to self-determination had been conducted in compliance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). That exercise took place on May 31, 1976 when the duly elected People's Assembly of East Timor formally petitioned Indonesia for integration. It is also a matter of record that the Provisional Government of East Timor had made every effort to have the United Nations participate in the decolonization process and never failed to report each and every stage of that process to the Secretary General of the United Nations, to his Special Representative, to the President of the Security Council and the Chairman of the Committee on Decolonization.

On its part, after complying with its Constitutional provisions and legal norms, including the dispatch of a Parliamentary fact finding mission to the Territory, the Indonesian Government accepted, on July 17, 1976, the petition of the people of East Timor to become independent through integration with the Republic.

This decision of the people of East Timor has been confirmed and reconfirmed, particularly during the May 1982 general elections when the East Timorese freely participated in the national vote with a 90% voter turnout. They thereby attested to their determination to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities as Indonesians.

Thus, Indonesia by its pronouncements and its actions clearly demonstrated its adherence to the principles governing the due process of self-determination and decolonization, while endeavouring to respond as correctly and restrainedly as possible to the chaotic and tragic circumstances which unfortunately accompanied that process in East Timor.

Moreover, the East Timorese people's decision to integrate with Indonesia constituted a definitive rejection of the Fretilin, a minority group which sought to impose its own designs on the Territory, without bothering about any semblance of an exercise of popular self-determination. Yet it is the remnants-in-exile of this same group who now pretend to speak on behalf of the East Timorese people and are demanding to repeat the decolonization process, which it itself tried to circumvent in 1975. Indeed, it is the ultimate insult to the entire Indonesian nation to compare, as certain petitioners attempted to do, these adventurers and pseudo-revolutionaries to Indonesia's freedom fighters.

Mr. Chairman,

Unable any longer to sustain their disinformation campaign on East Timor's decolonization process and Indonesia's role in it, our detractors subsequently stepped up their slander campaign on alleged human rights violations in the hope of playing on the humanitarian sentiments of especially western public opinion. However, on this point as well the international community has come to recognize such allegations for what they truly are: a groundless and malicious campaign intent on political rather than humanitarian objectives. This was inter alia established when at its session last year the Commission on Human Rights decided to cease consideration of the human rights situation

in East Timor. We had hoped that by now this Committee too would have realized that there being no basis in fact to the wellworn half-truths, distortions and outright falsehoods being peddled by the petitioners, there should be no more occasion for this annual charade to be enacted under its auspicies.

Mr. Chairman,

Also typical of their utter disregard for the facts, the petitioners continue to paint a wholly distortive picture of the social, economic, political, and security situation in East Timor.

On its part, my delegation has kept this Committee fully informed on the encouraging progress being made in the development efforts in East Timor. On many occasions in the past we have presented to this Committee the authoritative findings of representatives of international humanitarian and developmental organizations operating in East Timor, including the United Nations own agencies, as well as those of foreign Governments and journalists, who have been to the province and seen for themselves the true situation in East Timor. All of them have only praise for the progress being made in overcoming the backwardness and neglect that characterized the 450 years of colonial rule.

The Indonesian Government is providing access to East Timor on a regular basis to foreign representatives, parliamentary missions, international agencies, journalists and others. In the past three years alone over 100 visits were made to East Timor by senior representatives of the ICRC, UNICEF, CRS, WHO, dignitaries and journalists.

Thus, rather than reiterating again the full range projects and programs that are underway to improve the welfare of the people of East Timor, to restore their dignity and to promote their human rights as well as their political and cultural rights, my delegation will cite the most recent findings of independent observers following their on the spot observation of the province.

In January of this year Father Rudiger Seifert, a Catholic priest of the Dominican order in the Federal Republic of Germany, visited East Timor on behalf of Catholic charitable foundations involved in developmental programs for developing countries. His findings should be of particular interest since Father Seifert was in East Timor in 1973, when the province was still under the Portuguese administration. His report, carried, inter alia, by the Deutsche Welle radio program and the Catholic News Agency-Katholische Nachrichten Agentur of the Federal Republic of Germany is therefore a firsthand account of the fundamental changes that have taken place in East Timor as compared to the conditions that existed prior to integration.

At the outset, Fr. Seifert stressed that having read the various accusations against Indonesia, he planned his itinerary in such a way so as to enable him to determine their veracity or otherwise. He planned his itinerary himself and emphatically declared that there were no restrictions of any kind placed by the Indonesian Government on the areas he wanted to visit throughout the province or on the people he wished to see.

In seeking to determine Fretilin's strength and status among the people, Fr. Seifert, with the help of local priests who have the confidence of the population, held private interviews with numerous villagers in Fatumaka, Venilale, Cairui, Sare, Baucau and Komoro. They were all unanimous that Fretilin was no longer capable of organized military action. Reduced to a band of common criminals, they are feared by the population because they not only robbed but also murdered villagers and burned their homes, Fr. Seifert was told by the people. This was fully corraborated by the local priests.

Contrary to allegations, Fr. Seifert reported no malnutrition in the villages on the main island or on Atauro and that there was sufficient food stuffs to meet the nutritional needs of the population.

Fr. Seifert also found no religious persecution or restrictions on the full range of activities being carried out by the Catholic Church. This was confirmed to him by the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, Bishop Belo, who denied any grounds for such fears.

With regard to education, Fr. Seifert emphasised that while under the former Portuguese administration the illiteracy rate in East Timor was one of the highest in the world, the situation has dramatically improved owing to tremendous efforts by the Indonesian Government in cooperation with the Catholic Church to build schools in remote villages and to promote the training of teachers, with special emphasis placed on indigenous teacher training. Fr. Seifert was particularly impressed by the educational standards, the industriousness of the students and dedication of the teachers. In comparing the situation before and after integration he noted the following : a 10 fold increase in elementary schools, 20 fold increase in junior high schools and a 8 fold increase in senior high schools.

In the health sector Fr. Seifert reported that while in 1973 the Dili General Hospital was very small and technically underdeveloped, today it has been greatly expanded and provided with all the necessary wards, proper technical equipment and medicaments. He further noted an impressive expansion of all types of medical facilities in East Timor, from 56 units before integration to 378 after integration, including district hospitals, public health centers, clinics, first aid stations, family planning clinics, pharmacies, laboratories, mobile health centers and natal and post natal care centers. He had high praise for the programmes of the Department of Health, which is providing all medical treatment and medicine at no cost and which has expanded the health care system in East Timor to the point of exceeding that of any other province, including in the ratio of doctors to population.

Finally, with regard to the commitment of the Central Government to the accelerated development of East Timor to catch-up to the level of the rest of the country, Fr. Siefert underscored that the apportioned budget for East Timor is higher per capita than any other province which was confirmed by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. He was also impressed by the importance the East Timorese themselves attach to their future as Indonesians and their determination to contribute to the development of their province. In this regard, he urged social organizations and the Federal Republic of Germany to support East Timor with development aid.

If not for the constraints of time, I could go on to cite the findings of other independent observers, such as inter alia, those of the delegation from the Embassy of Japan in Jakarta which visited East Timor in April/May 1986, the delegation from the Government of the Australian Northern Territory which visited East Timor in February 1986 or Mr. Dag Klackenberg, of the Foreign Ministry of Sweden who visited East Timor in June this year. They all corroborate the conclusions reached by Father Seifert and contradict the claims of our detractors.

Mr. Chairman,

It should be obvious that the progress in the development of East Timor, the extensive visits by foreign representatives and the presence of numerous international agencies could only take place in an environment of political stability and security. As inter alia stressed by Mr. Dag Klackenburg following his visit to East Timor, the representatives of the Catholic Church, the Red Cross, UN agencies and foreign diplomats all confirm that military activity is low in East Timor and that the Fretilin has been so weakened that it no longer constitutes any threat even to the development projects that the Indonesian Government has begun.

We regret to note that despite these repeated corroborations of the factual security situation, the myth continues to be perpetuated as if there continues to be large scale military operations in East Timor and a large Indonesian military presence on the island. In this context, the distinguished representative of Mozambique seems to have been a bit over zealous in his figures. If we heard him correctly, there are now as many as 300,000 troops in East Timor alone. May I inform him that the total strength of Indonesia's armed forces, which includes the army, navy, air force, police, combat units as well as administrative personnel, is less than 300,000 and they are spread over 6,000 inhabited islands of the 27 provinces of the country for the defence of 165 million people. These figures alone I think suffice to show the rediculous level to which allegations and claims on military activities on East Timor by Indonesia's detractors have sunk over the years.

Indonesia's record on the question of freedom of worship, religious tolerance and respect for and active promotion of the cultural heritage of each of its diverse ethnic groups, is well established and beyond contention. There is complete freedom of religion in East Timor. There are no restrictions placed on the clergy's pastoral duties who have total freedom of movement throughout the province as well as abroad. The Catholic Church has full authority over the parochial school system and has been steadily expanding its educational activities. In addition, the Catholic Church in East Timor participates with other humanitarian organizations in providing assistance to the population. The Provincial and Central Governments have and are continuing to allocate significant resources, financial and otherwise, to facilitate the unfettered development of religious life in the province.

There is complete freedom of cultural expression in East Timor. The ethnic, linguistic and cultural heritage of the province is being protected, including its traditions and values, language and customs. Legislative and administrative measures have been enacted to ensure the continued flowering of the East Timorese culture in the context of modern life, including in the planning and execution of the development efforts. In the educational, information and communication fields as well as in the religious and social sectors, programs and projects have been implemented to preserve and promote the indigenous culture of the people. Not only is the cultural heritage of East Timor being preserved, but also awareness of East Timorese culture is being fostered among all other Indonesians, while at the same time the people of East Timor are being made aware of the other respective cultures of the country. Essentially, this process of enrichment of the national culture is and always has been at the very core of Indonesia's national motto "Unity through Diversity".

Mr. Chairman,

It is most gratifying that more and more members states have come to recognize and appreciate the fact that today, the East Timoreses are enjoying fully the

political freedoms and economic and social progress that is their birth right under the constitutional guarantees accorded to every citizen and to every province of the Republic of Indonesia.

We therefore again urge members of the Committee objectively to consider the social and economic realities as pertaining to East Timor today and to recognize that it is by respecting the decision of the majority of the people of East Timor that their genuine wishes and their basic human rights and interests can best be served.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.